



BILLING CODE 6717-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket No. PF19-8-000]

Northern Natural Gas Company; Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Planned South Sioux City to Sioux Falls A-Line Replacement Project, Request for Comments on Environmental Issues, and Notice of Public Scoping Sessions

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that will discuss the environmental impacts of the South Sioux City to Sioux Falls A-Line Replacement Project involving the abandonment, construction, and operation of pipeline facilities in Dakota and Dixon Counties, Nebraska and Lincoln and Union Counties, South Dakota by Northern Natural Gas Company (Northern). The Commission will use this EA in its decision-making process to determine whether the project is in the public convenience and necessity.

This notice announces the opening of the scoping process the Commission will use to gather input from the public and interested agencies about issues regarding the project. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Commission to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from its action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. NEPA also requires the Commission to discover concerns the public may have about proposals. This process is referred to as “scoping.” The main goal of the scoping process is to focus the analysis

in the EA on the important environmental issues. By this notice, the Commission requests public comments on the scope of issues to address in the EA. To ensure that your comments are timely and properly recorded, please submit your comments so that the Commission receives them in Washington, DC on or before 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time on December 23, 2019.

You can make a difference by submitting your specific comments or concerns about the project. Your comments should focus on the potential environmental effects, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen environmental impacts. Your input will help Commission staff determine what issues they need to evaluate in the EA. Commission staff will consider all filed comments during the preparation of the EA.

If you sent comments on this project to the Commission **before** the opening of this docket on July 16, 2019, you will need to file those comments under Docket No. PF19-8-000 to ensure they are considered as part of this proceeding.

This notice is being sent to the Commission's current environmental mailing list for this project. State and local government representatives should notify their constituents of this planned project and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern.

If you are a landowner receiving this notice, a pipeline company representative may contact you about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the planned facilities. The company would seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable easement agreement. You are not required to enter into an agreement. However, if the Commission approves the project, that approval conveys with it the right of eminent

domain. Therefore, if you and the company do not reach an easement agreement, the pipeline company could initiate condemnation proceedings in court. In such instances, compensation would be determined by a judge in accordance with state law.

A fact sheet prepared by the FERC entitled "An Interstate Natural Gas Facility On My Land? What Do I Need To Know?" is available for viewing on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov) at <https://www.ferc.gov/resources/guides/gas/gas.pdf>. This fact sheet addresses a number of typically asked questions, including the use of eminent domain and how to participate in the Commission's proceedings.

Public Participation

The Commission offers a free service called eSubscription which makes it easy to stay informed of all issuances and submittals regarding the dockets/projects to which you subscribe. These instant email notifications are the fastest way to receive notification and provide a link to the document files which can reduce the amount of time you spend researching proceedings. To sign up go to www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/esubscription.asp.

For your convenience, there are four methods you can use to submit your comments to the Commission. The Commission encourages electronic filing of comments and has staff available to assist you at (866) 208-3676 or FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov. Please carefully follow these instructions so that your comments are properly recorded:

- 1) You can file your comments electronically using the [eComment](#) feature, which is located on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the

link to [Documents and Filings](#). Using eComment is an easy method for submitting brief, text-only comments on a project;

- 2) You can file your comments electronically by using the [eFiling](#) feature, which is also on the Commission's website (www.ferc.gov) under the link to [Documents and Filings](#). With eFiling, you can provide comments in a variety of formats by attaching them as a file with your submission. New eFiling users must first create an account by clicking on "[eRegister](#)." You will be asked to select the type of filing you are making; a comment on a project is considered a "Comment on a Filing";
- 3) You can file a paper copy of your comments by mailing them to the following address. Be sure to reference the project docket number PF19-8-000 with your submission: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE, Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426; or
- 4) In lieu of sending written comments, the Commission invites you to attend one of the public scoping sessions its staff will conduct in the project area, scheduled as follows:

Date and Time	Location
Wednesday, December 11, 2019 5:00-7:30 pm	The Pointe Event Center 100 Truman Lane Elk Point, SD 57025 (605) 356-2874

<p>Thursday, December 12, 2019</p> <p>5:00-7:30 pm</p>	<p>Beresford Bridges Event Center 601 S 7th St. Beresford, SD 57004 (605) 201-4240</p>
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The primary goal of these scoping sessions is to have you identify the specific environmental issues and concerns that should be considered in the EA. Individual verbal comments will be taken on a one-on-one basis with a court reporter. This format is designed to receive the maximum amount of verbal comments, in a convenient way during the timeframe allotted.

Each scoping session is scheduled from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm Central Standard Time. You may arrive at any time after 5:00 pm. There will not be a formal presentation by Commission staff when the session opens. If you wish to speak, the Commission staff will hand out numbers in the order of your arrival. Comments will be taken until 7:30 pm. However, if no additional numbers have been handed out and all individuals who wish to provide comments have had an opportunity to do so, staff may conclude the session at 7:00 pm. Please see appendix 1 for additional information on the session format and conduct.¹

¹ The appendices referenced in this notice will not appear in the Federal Register. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail and are available at www.ferc.gov using the link called “eLibrary” or from the Commission’s Public Reference Room, 888 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20426, or call (202) 502-8371. For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

Your scoping comments will be recorded by a court reporter (with FERC staff or representative present) and become part of the public record for this proceeding. Transcripts will be publicly available on FERC's eLibrary system (see the last page of this notice for instructions on using eLibrary).

If a significant number of people are interested in providing verbal comments in the one-on-one settings, a time limit of 5 minutes may be implemented for each commenter.

It is important to note that the Commission provides equal consideration to all comments received, whether filed in written form or provided verbally at a scoping session. Although there will not be a formal presentation, Commission staff will be available throughout the scoping session to answer your questions about the environmental review process.

Representatives from Northern will also be present to answer project-specific questions.

Please note this is not your only public input opportunity; please refer to the review process flow chart in appendix 2.

Summary of the Planned Project

Northern plans to abandon in-place 79.2 miles of its 14-inch-diameter A-Line from South Sioux City, Nebraska to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and replace the line with 84.2 miles of 12-inch-diameter pipeline. In addition to the A-Line replacement, Northern plans to abandon in-place its 0.2-mile-long 2-inch-diameter Ponca Branch Line, which currently ties into the A-Line to be abandoned and replace it with a 2.0-mile-long 3-inch-

diameter pipeline. Northern also plans to install appurtenant facilities, including pig launchers and receivers,² regulators, tie-overs, an odorizer, and associated piping and valves. The Project will not change the current flow rate of 36 million cubic feet of gas per day.

The general location of the project facilities is shown in appendix 3.

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of the planned project would disturb about 1,048 acres of land for the aboveground facilities and the pipeline. Following construction, Northern would maintain about 510 acres for permanent operation of the project's facilities and allow the remaining acreage to revert to former uses. About 73 percent of the planned pipeline route parallels existing pipeline, utility, or road rights-of-way.

The EA Process

The EA will discuss impacts that could occur as a result of the construction and operation of the planned project under these general headings:

- geology and soils;
- water resources and wetlands;
- vegetation and wildlife;
- threatened and endangered species;
- cultural resources;
- land use;

² A “pig” is a tool that the pipeline company inserts into and pushes through the pipeline for cleaning the pipeline, conducting internal inspections, and other purposes.

- air quality and noise;
- public safety; and
- cumulative impacts

Commission staff will also evaluate possible alternatives to the planned project or portions of the project, and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource areas.

Although no formal application has been filed, Commission staff have already initiated a NEPA review under the Commission's pre-filing process. The purpose of the pre-filing process is to encourage early involvement of interested stakeholders and to identify and resolve issues before the Commission receives an application. As part of the pre-filing review, Commission staff will contact federal and state agencies to discuss their involvement in the scoping process and the preparation of the EA.

The EA will present Commission staffs' independent analysis of the issues. The EA will be available in electronic format in the public record through eLibrary³ and the Commission's website (<https://www.ferc.gov/industries/gas/enviro/eis.asp>). If eSubscribed, you will receive instant email notification when the EA is issued. The EA may be issued for an allotted public comment period. Commission staff will consider all comments on the EA before making recommendations to the Commission. To ensure Commission staff have the opportunity to consider and address your comments, please carefully follow the instructions in the Public Participation section, beginning on page 2.

³ For instructions on connecting to eLibrary, refer to the last page of this notice.

With this notice, the Commission is asking agencies with jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise with respect to the environmental issues related to this project to formally cooperate in the preparation of the EA.⁴ Agencies that would like to request cooperating agency status should follow the instructions for filing comments provided under the Public Participation section of this notice.

Consultation Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

In accordance with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's implementing regulations for section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Commission is using this notice to initiate consultation with the applicable State Historic Preservation Office(s), and to solicit their views and those of other government agencies, interested Indian tribes, and the public on the project's potential effects on historic properties.⁵ The EA for this project will document our findings on the impacts on historic properties and summarize the status of consultations under section 106.

Environmental Mailing List

The environmental mailing list includes federal, state, and local government representatives and agencies; elected officials; environmental and public interest groups; Native American Tribes; other interested parties; and local libraries and newspapers. This list also includes all affected landowners (as defined in the Commission's

⁴ The Council on Environmental Quality regulations addressing cooperating agency responsibilities are at Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1501.6.

⁵ The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations are at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 800. Those regulations define historic properties as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

regulations) who are potential right-of-way grantors, whose property may be used temporarily for project purposes, or who own homes within certain distances of aboveground facilities, and anyone who submits comments on the project. Commission staff will update the environmental mailing list as the analysis proceeds to ensure that Commission notices related to this environmental review are sent to all individuals, organizations, and government entities interested in and/or potentially affected by the planned project.

If the Commission issues the EA for an allotted public comment period, a *Notice of Availability* of the EA will be sent to the environmental mailing list and will provide instructions to access the electronic document on the FERC's website (www.ferc.gov). **If you need to make changes to your name/address, or if you would like to remove your name from the mailing list, please return the attached “Mailing List Update Form” (appendix 4).**

Becoming an Intervenor

Once Northern files its application with the Commission, you may want to become an “intervenor” which is an official party to the Commission's proceeding. Only intervenors have the right to seek rehearing of the Commission's decision and be heard by the courts if they choose to appeal the Commission's final ruling. An intervenor formally participates in the proceeding by filing a request to intervene pursuant to Rule 214 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedures (18 CFR 385.214). Motions to intervene are more fully described at <http://www.ferc.gov/resources/guides/how-to/intervene.asp>. Please note that the Commission will not accept requests for intervenor

status at this time. You must wait until the Commission receives a formal application for the project, after which the Commission will issue a public notice that establishes an intervention deadline.

Additional Information

Additional information about the project is available from the Commission's Office of External Affairs, at **(866) 208-FERC**, or on the FERC website (www.ferc.gov) using the eLibrary link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on "General Search" and enter the docket number in the "Docket Number" field, excluding the last three digits (i.e., PF19-8). Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at (866) 208-3676, or for TTY, contact (202) 502-8659. The eLibrary link also provides access to the texts of all formal documents issued by the Commission, such as orders, notices, and rulemakings.

Public sessions or site visits will be posted on the Commission's calendar located at www.ferc.gov/EventCalendar/EventsList.aspx along with other related information.

Dated: November 22, 2019.

Nathaniel J. Davis, Sr.,

Deputy Secretary.